

- o Please replace the two paragraphs at page 1, line 37 – page 2, line 24, with the following amended text:

02 The ONO layer 5 functions to prevent electric charges accumulated in the floating gate 3 from leaking out during a writing process to the memory cell, and, because of a necessity for confining the electric charges within the floating gate 4 over a long period of time, is required to exhibit a high insulating property. In the normal flash memory, the floating gate retains electrons. In an electron accumulating state, however, a comparatively weak electric field (a self electric field) generated by the electrons is applied to the ONO layer 5.

The silicon oxide layer 5a, on the side of the floating gate 4, of the ONO layer 5, if a layer thickness thereof is 5 – 6 nm, works as a Fowler-Nordheim type tunnel current conductive mechanism, wherein the electric current flowing with a low electric field is extremely small. Further, a barrier height of the silicon oxide layer 5a with respect to silicon is as high as 3.2 eV. Accordingly, if the silicon oxide layer 5a has no defect and there is no electric field enhancement effect based on a two-dimensional configuration of the floating gate 4, only the silicon oxide layer 5a must be capable of sufficiently retaining the electrons for a long time. In fact, however, there exist the defect and the two-dimensional electric field enhancement effect, and hence the ONO layer is used.